

George William Erving to Andrew Jackson, September 25, 1835, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

GEORGE W. ERVING TO JACKSON.1

1 George W. Erving was of a prominent family of Boston. He served in several minor posts and was United States minister to Spain 1814–1819. He spent the latter part of his life in private activities, and resided in Europe much of the time.

Private

Havre, France, September 25, 1835.

Dear Sir, Since the departure of Mr Livingston I have written to him several times, communicating to him whatever information has accidentally come to my knowledge touching our misunderstanding with this country, which I thought well shou'd be reported to you, tho' it might not be of major importance in the matter *sub cité* ; not having heard from him, except by one short letter soon after his arrival at home, hence presuming that he may have gone to N. Orleans, it is therefore that I now take the liberty of addressing myself directly to you, well assured that you will receive with favour any suggestion which even by remote possibility may contribute to the public service; and being at Havre for a few days I the rather take this opportunity of writing, that I may forward my letter without the interference of the french post or *police* .

You will doubtless have perceived that this government was much embarrassed by the *imprudence* (not to use a more severe term) of its first minister in consenting to the amendment of, or rather “rider” on the 25 million law when proposed in the chamber of deputies; that embarrassment was greatly augmented when the effect produced in the

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U.S. by the publication of the last note of Mr L. to the Duke of Broglie was known, and left not the least hope that any such explanation as is sought will be given *by you* ; their present purpose therefore is, as I believe, to procrastinate (supposing nothing to result from their instructions of June to Mr Pajot) 'till your term of office shall expire, and then, they count on the “ *pacifick disposition* ” of Mr Van Buren; this confidence they derive principally from Mr. Surrurier, and he from his conversations with Mr V.B.!! (he, S. has had similar conversations with several other “ *persons of influence* ” in Congress)—this I learnt from Mr S. himself, and I have not the least reason to doubt of his frankness and sincerity in his communication to me: as adding importance to that communication, and in confirmation of the opinion which I here express as to the present views of this government, is the enclosed short extract² from the “Journal de Debats”, of the 10th inst't, to which I pray your attention, for the “Journal de Debats” on all occasions speaks the language of the government, it is as “official”, as our “Globe”, with this difference in its favour, that its editor receives from the public purse a large compensation for his

² The extract in translation is as follows: “The publication of the last note of Mr. Livingston and his correspondence with the secretary of state, Mr. Forsyth, has produced little or no sensation amongst the class of speculators, which at this moment comprises nearly all the American population. Business has not suffered, all the men of business desire peace and believe in peace, they feel that by the vote of the chamber of deputies the greatest difficulty has been overcome, they *understand Mr. Van Buren*, and they know that the principal men of the democratic party *in concert with him* urge the American government to the means of conciliation.”

devotion to the king's ministers, some of whom are, and Mr. Guizot specially is, supposed frequently to write in it: the extract in question is from a letter of the American correspondent of that Journal, a Mr. Chevalier, who is a man of considerable talents and a good *observer* , tho he does not fail, in common with all other foreigners, to fall from time to time into very gross mistakes, principally as appears to me under the influence of mercantile preoccupations, acquired from those with whom he herds in our great

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cities; withal, he is authority here in all that relates to our country; no information from the U.S. is received with more implicit faith than is his, by all the friends of government: you will see at one glance the purpose of this publication—we are a nation of speculators determined on peace at any price, and tho' the President will not, as is now evident, make the explanations demanded, his successor will; this the french public are to understand; this is to tranquilize the commercial interests here.

As the case stands then in the conception of these people, the dignity of our government asserted and maintained by your firm character, is to be sacrificed by your pliant successor seeking popularity with the “peace party” in harmony with the sordid policy of the mercantile and speculating interests of N. York. This is certainly a position in which Mr. V.B. did not expect to be placed. If an amicable adjustment of the existing dispute can be effected without any sacrifice of national honour, we shall all rejoice certainly, but this ought to be in your time, your successor cannot desire to take to himself a merit which party spirit, if not publick opinion at home, in accord with the french policy, will give him at your cost; and shou'd the views of Mr. V.B. in this matter be now understood (or be it *misunderstood*) at home as they appear to be by these people, such distrust must be excited amongst your personal friends and democrats in general, as may produce a very serious effect in the coming election, for apprehensions will thence naturally be created as to matters of still greater moment, especially on that supereminently, vitally important affair of the *Bank*. These things being so, is it not a duty of Mr. V.B. to the publick, and still more especially to you, to take some early occasion of undeceiving this government? then, does not a regard to his own reputation require that he shou'd make such open and unequivocal declarations as shall dispel all doubt; shall exempt him from all *appearance* of duplicity; from the reproach which otherwise may attach to him of interfering by his present influence, or by anticipation of the future, with the regular course of policy under your administration? as an honorable man, personal gratitude out of question, certainly he cannot permit it to be supposed that he wou'd reserve to himself the adjustment so earnestly looked for, or that he differs from your opinion or disposition in

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the least degree, as to the course to be pursued under whatever circumstances. I pray you not to understand me as having any opinion of my own unfavorable to the good faith of Mr. V.B. in this case, indeed I should not have considered as of very serious importance the communication of Mr. Serurier, concluding rather that it referred to some general, loose, perhaps unguarded expressions of friendly feeling on the part of Mr. V.B., had I not seen this letter of Chevalier, the publication of which at this moment makes evident to me that rightfully or wrongfully a reliance is placed by the friends of concession at home as well as by this government on the future policy of V.B. as Presidt., on failure of his present influence with you.

I am aware that this matter may not appear to you of the importance which I give to it, yet I have written frankly and freely counting upon your indulgence in consideration of the purely patriotick motive, a very sincere and thorough adherence to the principles of your administration which alone, as I assure you, prompt me to address you, and I pray you to believe me Dear Sir to be always with the most perfect respect and attachment,

Yr very obt. S.